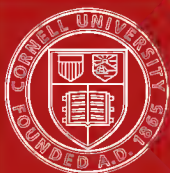


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THE VIGIL OF VENUS
AND OTHER POEMS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POEMS AND BALLADS

THE GOLDEN POMP

THE WHITE WOLF

THE MAYOR OF TROY

MERRY-GARDEN

MAJOR VIGOUREUX

THE
VIGIL OF VENUS
AND OTHER POEMS BY

“Q”

Quiller-Couch, Arthur Thomas

METHUEN & CO. LTD.
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TO MAURICE HEWLETT

HEWLETT! as ship to ship

Let us the ensign dip.

There may be who despise

For dross our merchandise,

Our balladries, our bales

Of woven tales ;

Yet, Hewlett, the glad gales

Favonian! And what spray

Our dolphins toss'd in play,

Full in old Triton's beard, on Iris' shimmering veils !

Scant tho' the freight of gold

Commercial in our hold,

Pæstum, Eridanus

Perchance have barter'd us

'Bove chrematistic care

TO MAURICE HEWLETT

Some precious, rare,
Unmarketable ware ;
Or amber to bedeck
A Grace's naked neck,
Or transient rose, yet meet to braid Apollo's hair.

Boon further wouldst thou beg
Of Jove ? Then I've a keg
Of Coan in the waist.
Come, row aboard, and taste
The glorifying juice
That wise men use
And only fools refuse !
'Twill teach thee tolerate
All rubs of human fate,
The which to mitigate are lent the Vine, the Muse.

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THE VIGIL OF VENUS

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

THE *Pervigilium Veneris*—of unknown authorship, but clearly belonging to the late literature of the Roman Empire—has survived in two MSS., both preserved at Paris in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*.

Of these two MSS. the better written may be assigned (at earliest) to the close of the seventh century; the other (again at earliest) to the close of the ninth. Both are corrupt; the work of two illiterate copyists who—strange to say—were both smatterers enough to betray their little knowledge by converting *Pervigilium* into *Per Virgilium* (*scilicet*, “by Virgil”): thus helping us to follow the process of thought by which the Middle Ages turned Virgil into a wizard. Here and there the texts become quite silly, separately or in consent; and just where they agree in the most surprising way—*i.e.* in the arrangement of the lines—the conjectural emendator is invited to do his worst by a note at the head of the older Codex, “Sunt vero versus xxii”—“There are rightly twenty-two lines.”

This has started much ingenious guess-work. But no really convincing rearrangement has been achieved as yet; and I have been content to take the text pretty well as it stands, with a few corrections upon which most scholars

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

agree. With a poem of "paratactic structure" the best of us may easily go astray by transposing lines, or blocks of lines, to correspond with *our* sequence of thought; and I shall be content if, following the only texts to which appeal can be made,¹ my translation be generally intelligible.

It runs pretty closely, line for line, with the original; because one may love and emulate classical terseness even while despairing to rival it. But it does not attempt to be literal; for even were it worth doing, I doubt if it be possible for anyone in our day to hit precisely the note intended by an author or heard by a reader in the eighth century. Men change subtly as nations succeed to nations, religions to religions, philosophies to philosophies; and it is a property of immortal poetry to shift its appeal. It does not live by continuing to mean the same thing. It grows as we grow. We smile, for instance, when some interlocutor in a dialogue of Plato takes a line from the *Iliad* and applies it seriously *au pied de la lettre*. We can hardly conceive what the great line conveyed to him; but it may mean something equally serious to us, though in a different way.

¹ Facsimiles of the two Codices can be studied in a careful edition of the *Pervigilium* by Mr Cecil Clementi, published by Mr B. H Blackwell of Oxford, 1911.

PERVIGILIUM VENERIS

*CRAS amet qui nunquam amavit ; quique amavit cras
amet.*

Ver novum, ver jam canorum, vere natus orbis est ;

Vere concordant amores, vere nubunt alites,

Et nemus comam resolvit de maritis imbribus.

5 Cras amorum copulatrix inter umbras arborum

Implicat casas virentes de flagello myrteo :

Cras Dione jura dicit fulva sublimi throno.

*Cras amet qui nunquam amavit ; quique amavit cras
amet.*

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

To-morrow—What news of to-morrow ?

*Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who
have loved, love anew !*

It is Spring, it is chorussing Spring ; 'tis the
birthday of Earth, and for you !

It is Spring ; and the Loves and the birds wing to-
gether and woo to accord

Where the bough to the rain has unbraided her
locks as a bride to her lord.

5 For she walks—she our Lady, our Mistress of
Wedlock—the woodlands atween,

And the bride-bed she weaves them, with myrtle
enlacing, with curtains of green.

Look aloft ! list the law of Dione, sublime and en-
throned in the blue :

*Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have
loved, love anew !*

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

Tunc liquore de superno spumeo et ponti globo,
10 Cærulas inter catervas, inter et bipedes equos,
Fecit undantem Dionen de maritis imbribus.
*Cras amet qui nunquam amavit; quique amavit cras
amet.*

Ipsa gemmis purpurantem pingit annum floribus,
Ipsa surgentes papillas de Favoni spiritu
15 Urget in toros tepentes; ipsa roris lucidi
Noctis aura quem relinquit, spargit umentes aquas.
Et micant lacrimæ trementes de caduco pondere :

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

Time was that a rain-cloud begat her, impregning
the heave of the deep,

10 'Twixt hooves of sea-horses a-scatter, stampeding
the dolphins as sheep.

Lo! arose of that bridal Dione, rainbow'd and
besprent of its dew !

*Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have
loved, love anew !*

She, she, with her gem-dripping finger enamels the
wreath of the year ;

She, she, when the maid-bud is nubile and swelling
winds—whispers anear,

15 Disguising her voice in the Zephyr's—"So secret
the bed! And thou shy?"

She, she, thro' the hush'd humid Midsummer night
draws the dew from on high ;

Dew bright with the tears of its origin, dew with
its weight on the bough,

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

Gutta præceps orbe parvo sustinet casus suos.

En, pudorem florulentæ prodiderunt purpuræ :

20 Umor ille quem serenis astra rorant noctibus

Mane virgineas papillas solvit umentis peplo.

Ipsa jussit mane ut udæ virgines nubant rosæ ;

Fusa Paphies de cruore deque Amoris osculis

Deque gemmis deque flammis deque solis purpuris,

25 Cras ruborem qui latebat veste tectus ignea

Unico marita nodo non pudebit solvere.

*Cras amet qui nunquam amavit ; quique amavit cras
amet.*

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

Misdoubting and clinging and trembling—"Now,
now must I fall? Is it now?"

Star-fleck'd on the stem of the brier as it gathers
and falters and flows,

20 Lo! its trail runs a ripple of fire on the nipple it
bids be a rose,

Yet englobes it diaphanous, veil upon veil in a
tiffany drawn

To bedrape the small virginal breasts yet unripe
for the spousal of dawn;

Till the vein'd very vermeil of Venus, till Cupid's
incarnadine kiss,

Till the ray of the ruby, the sunrise, ensanguine the
bath of her bliss;

25 Till the wimple her bosom uncover, a tissue of fire
to the view,

And the zone o'er the wrists of the lover slip down
as they reach to undo.

*Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have
loved, love anew!*

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

Ipsa nymphas diva luco jussit ire myrteo :

It puer comes puellis. Nec tamen credi potest

30 Esse Amorem feriatum, si sagittas vexerit.

Ite, nymphæ, posuit arma, feriatum est Amor ;

Jussus est inermis ire, nudus ire jussus est,

Neu quid arcu, neu sagitta, neu quid igne læderet ;

Sed tamen nymphæ cavete, quod Cupido pulcher
est ;

35 Est in armis totus idem quando nudus est Amor !

*Cras amet qui nunquam amavit ; quique amavit cras
amet.*

Conpari Venus pudore mittit ad te virgines :

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

“Go, maidens,” Our Lady commands, “while the
myrtle is green in the groves,

Take the Boy to your escort.” “But ah!” cry the
maidens, “what trust is in Love’s

30 Keeping holiday too, while he weareth his archery,
tools of his trade?”

“Go! he lays them aside, an apprentice released;
ye may wend unafraid.

See, I bid him disarm, he disarms; mother-naked I
bid him to go,

And he goes mother-naked. What flame can he
shoot without arrow or bow?”

Yet beware ye of Cupid, ye maidens! Beware
most of all when he charms

35 As a child: for the more he runs naked, the more
he’s a strong man-at-arms.

*Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have
loved, love anew!*

“Lady Dian”—Behold how demurely the damsels
approach her and sue—

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

Una res est quam rogamus : cede, virgo Delia,

Ut nemus sit incruentum de ferinis stragibus.

40 Ipsa vellet ut venires, si deceret virginem :

Jam tribus choros videres feriatos noctibus

Congreges inter catervas ire per saltus tuos,

Floreas inter coronas, myrteas inter casas :

Nec Ceres nec Bacchus absunt, nec poetarum Deus ;

45 De tenente tota nox est pervigilia canticis :

Regnet in silvis Dione ; tu recede, Delia.

*Cras amet qui nunquam amavit ; quique amavit cras
amet.*

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

“Hear Venus her only petition! Dear maiden of
Delos, depart!

Let the forest be bloodless to-day, unmolested the
roe and the hart!

40 Holy huntress, thyself she would bid be her guest,
could thy chastity stoop

To approve of our revels, our dances—three
nights that we weave in a troop

Arm-in-arm thro’ thy sanctu’ries whirling, till faint
and dispersed in the grove

We lie with thy lilies for chaplets, thy myrtles for
arbours of love:

And Apollo, with Ceres and Bacchus to chorus—
song, harvest, and wine—

45 Hymns thee dispossess’d, “’Tis Dione who reigns!
Let Diana resign!”

O, the wonderful nights of Dione! dark bough,
with her star shining thro’!

*Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have
loved, love anew!*

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

Jussit Hyblæis tribunal stare diva floribus ;

Præses ipsa jura dicit, adsederunt Gratia.

50 Hybla, totos funde flores quidquid annus adtulit ;

Hybla, florum rumpe vestem quantus Ætnæ campus
est.

Ruris hic erunt puellæ, vel puellæ montium,

Quæque silvas, quæque lucos, quæque fontes in-
colunt :

Jussit omnes adsidere mater alitis dei,

55 Jussit et nudo puellas nil Amori credere.

*Cras amet qui nunquam amavit ; quique amavit cras
amet.*

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

She has set up her court, has Our Lady, in Hybla,
and deckt it with blooms :—

With the Graces at hand for assessors Dione dis-
penses her dooms.

50 Now burgeon, O Hybla ! put forth and abound, till
Proserpina's field,

To the foison thy lap overflowing its laurel of Sicily
yield.

Call, assemble the nymphs—hamadryad and dryad—
the echoes who court

From the rock, who the rushes inhabit, in ripples
who swim and disport.

“ I admonish you maids—I, his mother, who suckled
the scamp ere he flew—

55 An ye trust to the Boy flying naked, some pestilent
prank ye shall rue.”

*Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have
loved, love anew !*

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

Et rigentibus virentes ducit umbras floribus :
Cras erit quum primus Æther copulavit nuptias,
Et pater totum creavit vernis annum nubibus.

60 In sinum maritus imber fluxit almæ conjugis,
Unde fetus mixtus omnes aleret magno corpore.
Ipsa venas atque mentem permeanti spiritu
Intus occultis gubernat procreatrix viribus,
Perque cœlum, perque terras, perque pontum
subditum

65 Pervium sui tenorem seminali tramite

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

She has coax'd her the shade of the hazel to cover
the wind-flower's birth,

Since the day the Great Father begat it, descending
in streams upon Earth ;

When the Seasons were hid in his loins, and the
Earth lay recumbent, a wife,

60 To receive in the searching and genital shower the
soft secret of life.

As the terrible thighs drew it down, and conceived,
as the embryo ran

Thoro' blood, thoro' brain, and the Mother gave all
to the making of man,

She, she, our Dione, directed the seminal current to
creep,

Penetrating, possessing, by devious paths all the
height, all the deep.

65 She, of all procreation procuress, the share to the
furrow laid true ;

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

Inbuit, jussitque mundum nosse nascendi vias.

*Cras amet qui nunquam amavit ; quique amavit cras
amet.*

Ipsa Trojanos nepotes in Latinos transtulit,

Ipsa Laurentem puellam conjugem nato dedit ;

70 Moxque Marti de sacello dat pudicam virginem ;

Romuleas ipsa fecit cum Sabinis nuptias,

Unde Ramnes et Quirites proque prole posterum

Romuli matrem crearet et nepotem Cæsarem.

*Cras amet qui nunquam amavit ; quique amavit cras
amet.*

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

She, she, to the womb drave the knowledge, and
open'd the ecstasy through.

*Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have
loved, love anew !*

Her favour it was fill'd the sail of the Trojan for
Latium bound ;

Her favour that won her Æneas a bride on Lauren-
tian ground,

70 And anon from the cloister inveigled the Virgin, the
Vestal, to Mars ;

As her wit by the wild Sabine rape recreated her
Rome for its wars,

With the Ramnes, Quirites, together ancestrally
proud as they drew

From Romulus down to our Cæsar—last, best of that
bone, of that thew.

*Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have
loved, love anew !*

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

75 Rura fecundat voluptas : rura Venerem sentiunt :

Ipsæ Amor puer Dionæ rure natus dicitur.

Hunc ager, cum parturiret ipsa, suscepit sinu :

Ipsa florum delicatis educavit osculis.

*Cras amet qui nunquam amavit ; quique amavit cras
amet.*

80 Ecce jam super genestas explicant tauri latus,

Quisque tutus quo tenetur conjugali fœdere :

Subter umbras cum maritis ecce balantum greges ;

Et canoras non tacere diva jussit alites.

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

75 Pleasure planteth a field ; it conceives to the passion,
the pang, of his joy.

In a field was Dione in labour delivered of Cupid the
Boy ;

And the field in its fostering lap from her travail
received him : he drew

Mother's milk from the delicate kisses of flowers ;
and he prosper'd and grew—

*Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have
loved, love anew !*

80 Lo ! behold ye the bulls, with how lordly a flank
they besprawl on the broom !—

Yet obey the uxorious yoke, and are tamed to
Dione her doom.

Or behear ye the sheep, to the husbanding rams
how they bleat to the shade !

Or behear ye the birds, at the Goddess' command
how they sing unafraid !

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

Jam loquaces ore rauco stagna cycni perstrepunt ;
85 Adsonat Terei puella subter umbram populi,
Ut putes motus amoris ore dici musico,
Et neges queri sororem de marito barbaro.
Illa cantat, nos tacemus. Quando ver venit meum?
Quando fiam uti chelidon, ut tacere desinam?
90 Perdidi Musam tacendo, nec me Apollo respicit ;
Sic Amyclas, cum tacerent, perdidit silentium.
*Cras amet qui nunquam amavit; quique amavit cras
amet.*

THE VIGIL OF VENUS

Be it harsh as the swannery's clamour that shatters
the hush of the lake,

85 Be it dulcet as where Philomela holds darkling the
poplar awake,

So melting her soul into music, you'd vow 'twas her
passion, her own,

She plaineth—her sister forgot, with the Daulian
crime long-agone.

Hark! Hush! Draw around to the circle . . . Ah,
loitering Summer! Say when

For me shall be broken the charm, that I chirp with
the swallow again?

90 I am old; I am dumb; I have waited to sing till
Apollo withdrew—

So Amyclæ a moment was mute, and for ever a
wilderness grew.

*Now learn ye to love who loved never—now ye who have
loved, love anew,*

To-morrow!—to-morrow!

TO
CHARLES THURSBY
THE "ONLIE BEGETTER"

THE REGENT
A DRAMA IN ONE ACT

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

CARL' ANTONIO, *Duke of Adria*

TONINO, *his young son*

LUCIO, *Count of Vallescura, brother to the Duchess*

CESARIO, *Captain of the Guard*

GAMBA, *a Fool*

OTTILIA, *Duchess and Regent of Adria*

LUCETTA, *a Lady-in-Waiting*

FULVIA, *a Lady of the Court*

*Courtiers, Priests, Choristers, Soldiers, Mariners,
Townsfolk, etc.*

The Scene is the Ducal Palace of Adria, in the N. Adriatic

The Date, 1571

THE REGENT

SCENE.—*A terraced courtyard before the Ducal Palace. Porch and entrance of Chapel, R. A semicircular balcony, L., with balustrade and marble seats, and an opening whence a flight of steps leads down to the city. The city lies out of sight below the terrace; from which, between its cypresses and statuary, is seen a straight stretch of a canal; beyond the canal are sand-hills and the line of the open sea. Mountains, L., dip down to the sea and form a curve of the coast.*

As the curtain rises, a crowd of town and country folk is being herded to the back of the terrace by the Ducal Guard, under Cesario. Within the Chapel, to

THE REGENT

the sound of an organ, boys' voices are chanting the service of the Mass.

Cesario, Gamba the Fool, Guards, Populace.

Cesario. Way there! Give room! The Regent comes from Mass.

Guards, butt them on the toes—way there! give room!

Prick me that laggard's leg—importunate fools!

Guards. Room for the Regent! Room!

[The sacring bell rings within the Chapel.

Cesario. Hark there, the bell!

[A pause. Men of the crowd take off their caps.

Could ye not leave, this day of all the year,

Your silly suits, petitions, quarrels, pleas?

Could ye not leave, this once in seven years,

Our Lady to come holy-quiet from Mass.

Lean on the wall, and loose her cage-bird heart,

THE REGENT

To lift and breast and dance upon the breeze.

Draws home her lord the Duke ?

Crowd.

Long live the Duke !

Cesario. The devil, then ! Why darken his approach ?

Gamba (*from the bench where he has been mending his viol*). Because, Captain, 'tis a property knaves and fools have in common—to stand in their own light, as 'tis of soldiers to talk bad logic. That knave, now—he with the red nose and the black eye—the Duke's colours, loyal man!—you clap an iron on his leg, and ask him why he is not down in the city, hanging them out of window !
Go to : you are a soldier !

Cesario. And you a Fool, and on your own showing stand in your own light.

Gamba. Nay, neither in my own light, nor as a Fool. So should myself stand between the sun and my shadow ; whereas I am not myself—these seven years have I been but the shadow of a

THE REGENT

Fool. Yet one must tune up for the Duke.

(Strikes his viol and sings.)

“ Bird of the South, my Rondinello——”

Flat—Flat !

Cesario (calling up to watchman on the Chapel roof). Ho,

there ! What news ?

A Voice.

Captain, no sail !

Cesario.

Where sits

The wind ?

Voice.

Nor' west, and north a point !

Cesario.

Perchance

They have down'd sail and creep around the
flats.

Gamba (tuning his viol). Flats, flats ! the straight
horizon, and the life

These seven years laid by rule ! The curst
canal

Drawn level through the drawn-out level sand

And thistle-tufts that stink as soon as pluck'd !

THE REGENT

Give me the hot crag and the dancing heat,
Give me the Abruzzi, and the cushioned thyme—
Brooks at my feet, high glittering snows above.
What were thy music, viol, without a ridge?

[Noise of commotion in the city below.]

Cesario. Watchman, what news?

A Voice. Sir, on the sea no sail!

One of the Crowd. But through the town below a horse-
man spurs—

I think, Count Lucio! Yes—Count Lucio!

He nears, draws rein, dismounts!

Cesario. Sure, he brings news.

Gamba. I think he brings word the Duke is sick;
his loyal folk have drunk so much of his
health.

*[A murmur has been growing in the town below. It
breaks into cheers as Count Lucio comes spring-
ing up to the terrace.]*

THE REGENT

Enter Lucio.

Lucio. News! Where's the Regent? Eh? is Mass not
said?

Cesario, news! I rode across the dunes;
A pilot—Nestore—you know the man—
Came panting. Sixteen sail beyond the point!
That's not a galley lost!

Crowd. Long live the Duke!

Lucio. Hark to the tocsin! I have carried fire—
Wildfire! Why, where's my sister? I've a mind—
*[He strides towards the door of the Chapel; but
pauses at the sound of chanting within, and
comes back to Cesario.]*

Man, are you mute? I say the town's aflame
Below! But here, up here, you stand and stare
Like prisoners loosed to daylight. Rub your eyes,
Believe!

Cesario (musing). It has been long.

Lucio. As tapestry

THE REGENT

Pricked out by women's needles ; point-device
As saints in fitted haloes. Yet they stab,
Those needles. Oh, the devil take their tongues !

Cesario. Why, what's the matter ?

Lucio. P'st ! another lie
Against the Countess Fulvia ; and the train
Laid to my sister's ear. Cesario,
My sister is a saint—and yet she married :
Therefore should understand . . . Would saints, like
cobblers,
Stick but to business in this naughty world !
Ah, well ! the Duke comes home.

Cesario. And what of that ?

Lucio. Release !

Cesario. Release ?

Lucio (*mocking a chant within the Chapel*). From priests
and petticoats

Deliver us, Good Lord !

Gamba (*strikes a chord on viol*). AMEN !

THE REGENT

Cesario.

Count Lucio,

These seven years agone, when the Duke sailed,
You were a child—a pretty, forward boy ;
And I a young lieutenant of the Guard,
Burning to serve abroad. But that day, rather,
I clenched my nails over an inward wound :
For that a something manlier than my years—
Look, bearing, what-not—by the Duke not miss'd,
Condemned me to promotion : I must bide
At home, command the Guard ! 'Tis an old hurt,
But scalded on my memory. . . . Well, they sailed !
And from the terrace here, sick with self-pity,
Wrapped in my wrong, forgetful of devoir,
I watch'd them through a mist—turned with a sob—
Uptore my rooted sight——

There, there she stood ;
Her hand press'd to her girdle, where the babe
Stirred in her body while she gazed—she gazed—
But slowly back controlled her eyes, met mine ;

THE REGENT

So—with how wan, how small, how brave a smile!—
Reached me her hands to kiss . . .

O royal hands!

What burdens since they have borne let Adria tell.

But hear me swear by them, Count Lucio—

Who slights our Regent throws his glove to me.

Lucio. Why, soothly, she's my sister!

Cesario. 'But the court

Is dull? No masques, few banquetings—and
prayers

Be long, and youth for pastime leaps the gate?'

Yet if the money husbanded on feasts

Have fed our soldiery against the Turk,

Year after year, and still the State not starved;

Was't not well done? And if, responsible

To God, and lonely, she has leaned on God

Too heavily for our patience, was't not wise?—

And well, though weary?

Lucio.

I tell you, she's my sister!

THE REGENT

Cesario. Well, an you will, bridle on that. Lord

Lucio,

You named the Countess Fulvia. To my sorrow,

Two hours ago I called on her and laid her

Under arrest.

Lucio. The devil! For what?

Cesario. For that

A lady, whose lord keeps summer in the hills

To nurse a gouty foot, should penalize

His dutiful return by shutting doors

And hanging out a ladder made of rope,

Or prove its safety by rehearsing it

Upon a heavier man.

Lucio. I'll go to her.

Oh, this is infamous!

Cesario. Nay, be advised:

No hardship irks the lady, save to sit

At home and feed her sparrows; nor no worse

Annoy than from her balcony to spy

THE REGENT

(Should the eye rove) a Switzer of the Guard
At post between her raspberry-canes, to watch
And fright the thrushes from forbidden fruit.

Lucio. Infamous ! infamous !

Cesario. Enough, my lord :

The Regent !

[Doors of the Chapel open. The organ sounds, with voices of choir chanting the recessional. The Court enters from Mass, attending the Regent Ottilia and her son Tonino. She wears a crown and heavy dalmatic. Her brother Lucio, controlling himself with an effort, kisses her hand and conducts her to the marble bench, which serves for her Chair of State. She bows, receiving the homage of the crowd ; but, after seating herself, appears for a few moments unconscious of her surroundings. Then, as her rosary slips from her fingers and falls heavily at her feet, she speaks.]

THE REGENT

Regent. So slips the chain linking this world with Heaven,
And drops me back to earth : so slips the chain
That hangs my spirit to the Redeemer's cross
Above pollution in the pure swept air
Whereunder frets this hive : so slips the chain—
(*She starts up*)—God ! the dear sound ! Was that
his anchor dropped ?
Speak to the watchman, one ! Call to the watch !
What news ?

Cesario. Aloft ! What news ?

Voice above. No sail as yet !

Regent. Ah, pardon, sirs ! My ears are strung to-day,
And play false airs invented by the wind.
Methought a hawse-pipe rattled . . .

Gamba (*chants to his viol*). *Shepherds, see—*

Lo ! What a mariner love hath made me !

Regent. What chants the Fool ?

Gamba. Madonna, 'tis a trifle
Made by a silly poet on wives that stand

THE REGENT

All night at windows listening the surf—

Now he comes ! Will he come ? Alas ! no, no !

Lucio. Peace, lively ! Madam, there is news—brave
news !

I'm from the watch-house. There the pilots tell
Of sixteen sail to the southward ! Sixteen sail,
And nearing fast !

Regent. Praise God ! dear Lucio !

*[She has seated herself again. She takes Lucio's
hand and speaks, petting it.]*

What ? Glowing with my happiness ? That's
like you.

But for yourself the hour, too, holds release.

Lucio (*between sullenness and shame, with a glance at
Cesario*). "Release ?"

Regent. You will forgive ? I have great need
To be forgiven : sadly I have been slack
In guardianship, and by so much betrayed
My promise to our mother's passing soul.

THE REGENT

Myself in cares immersed, I left the child
Among his toys—and turn to find him man—
But yet so much a boy that boyhood can
(*Wistfully*) Laugh in his honest eyes? Forgive me,
Lucio!

Tell me, whate'er have slackened, there has slipped
No knot of love. To-morrow we'll make sport,
Be playmates and invent new games, and old—
Wreath flowers for crowns——

*[He drags his hand away. She gazes at him
wistfully, and turns to the Captain of the
Guard.]*

Cesario,

What are the suits?

Cesario. They are but three to-day,
Madonna. First, a scoundrel here in irons
For having struck the Guard.

Regent (eying the culprit). His name, I think,
Is Donatello Crocco. Hey? You improve,

THE REGENT

Good man. The last time 'twas your wife you basted.

At this rate, in another year or two

You'll bang the Turk. Do you confess the assault ?

Prisoner. I do.

Regent. Upon a promise we dismiss you.

Your tavern, as it comes into our mind,

Is the 'Three Cups.' So many, and no more,

You'll drink to-day—have we your word? Three

cups,

And each a *Viva* for the Duke's return.

Prisoner. Your Highness, I'll not take it at the price

Of my good manners. I'm a gallant man :

And who in Adria calls 'Three cheers for the
Duke !'

But adds a fourth for the Duchess? Lady, nay ;

Grant me that fourth, or back I go to the cells !

[*The Regent laughs and nods to the Guard to release
him.*]

Regent. What next ?

THE REGENT

An Old Woman (very rapidly). Your Highness will not

know me—Zia

Agnese, Giovannucci's wife that was ;

And feed a two-three cows, as a widow may,

On the marshes where the grass is salt and sweet,

As your Highness knows—and always true to pail

Until this Nicolo——

Nicolo.

Lies ! lies, your Highness !

Old Woman. Having a quarrel, puts the evil eye

On Serafina. She's my best of cows,

In stall with calf but ten days weaned.

Nicolo.

Lies ! lies !

Old Woman. I would your Highness saw her ! When

that thief

Hangs upon Lazarus' bosom, he'll be bidding

A ducat for each drop of milk he's cost me,

To cool his tongue.

Regent.

Ay—ay, the cow is sick,

I think ; and mind me, being country-bred,

THE REGENT

Of a cure for such : which is, to buy a comb
And comb the sufferer's tail at feeding-time.
If Zia Agnese do but this, she'll counter
The Evil Eye, and maybe with her own
Detect who thieves her Serafina's hay.

Old Woman. }
Nicolo. } God bless your Highness !

Regent (taking up a fresh suit). Why, what's here ?

“ *Costanza,*

Wife of Giuseppe Boni, citeth him

And sueth to live separate, for neglect

And divers beatings, as to wit——” H'm, h'm—

Likewise to keep the child Geronimo,

Begotten of his body. You defend

The suit, Giuseppe ?

A Young Peasant (shrugs his shoulders). As the woman will !

I'll not deny I beat her.

Regent.

But neglect !

How came you to neglect her ? Look on her—

THE REGENT

The handsome, frowsy slut, that, by appearance,
Hath never washed her body since she wed.
A beating we might pass. But how neglect
To take her by the neck unto the pump
And hold her till her wet and furious face
Were once again worth kissing? Well—well—well!
Neglect is proven. She shall have deserts:
(*To a Clerk*) But—write, “Defendant keeps his
lawful child.”

Young Peasant. My lady——

Wife. Nay, my lady——

Regent. Eh? What's this?

Wife. The poor *bambino*! Nay, 'twas not the suit!

How should Giuseppe, being a fool, a man——

Young Peasant. Aye, aye: that's sense. I love him:
still, you see——

Regent. An if my judgment suit you not, go home,
The pair. (*As they are going she calls the woman back.*)
Costanza! hath your husband erred

THE REGENT

With other woman ?

Young Peasant. Never !

Wife. I'll not charge him

With that.

Regent. But, yes, you may. This man hath held
Another woman to his breast.

Wife. Her name ?

That I may tear her eyes !

Regent. Her name's Costanza.

The same Costanza that, with body washed,

With ribbon in her hair, light in her eyes,

Arrayed a cottage to allure his heart.

Go home, poor fools, and find her ! . . .

Heigh ! No others ? [*Heaves a sigh.*]

Captain, dismiss the Guard. The watch, aloft—

Set him elsewhere. We would not be o'erlooked.

You only, Lucio—you, Lucetta—stay ;

You for a while, Cesario.

[*Exeunt Courtiers, Guard, Crowd, etc.*]

THE REGENT

Heigh! that's over—

The last Court of the Regent; and the books,
Accounts of stewardship, my seven years all,
Closed here for audit.

Nay, there's one thing more—
Brother, erewhile I spoke you sisterly,
You turned away, and still you bite your lip:
Signs that may short my preface. It concerns
The Countess Fulvia.

Lucio.

Ha!

Regent.

Go, bring her, Captain.

[*Exit Cesario.*]

List to me, Lucio: listen, brother dear,
First playmate—child, tending whose innocence
Myself learned motherhood. Shall I deny
Youth to be loved and follow after love?
There is a love breaks like a morning beam
On the husht novice kneeling by his arms;
And worse there is, whose kisses strangle love,

THE REGENT

Whose feet take hold of hell. My Lucio,
Follow not that!

Lucio. Why, who—who hath malign'd
The Countess?

Regent. Not malign'd. Lucetta, here——

Lucio. Lucetta! Curse Lucetta and her tongue!

Am I a child, to be nagged by waiting-maids?

Regent. No, but a man, and shall weigh evidence.

Lucio. But I'll not hear it! If her viper tongue
Can kill, why kill it must. But send me a man,
And I will smite his mouth—ay, slit his tongue—
That dares defame the Countess!

Regent. Stay: she comes.

[*Enter the Countess Fulvia, Cesario attending.*

Madam, the reason wherefore you are summoned
No doubt you guess, from a rude earlier call
Our Captain paid you. Certain practices,
Which you may force me name, are charged upon
you

THE REGENT

On testimony you may force me call

And may with freedom question.

Fulvia.

I'll not question :

No, nor I will not answer.

Lucio.

Then I'll answer !

For me, for all, she is innocent !

Regent.

For you ?

We'll hope it : but ' for all ' 's more wide an oath

Than you can swear, sir. I'll not bandy you

Words nor debate. Myself the ladder saw ;

Lucetta, here, the ladder and the man.

What man she will not say. Cesario

Has tracked his footprint on her garden plots.

Must we say more ?

Fulvia.

No need. Her fingering mind

Is a close cupboard turning all things rancid.

Lucio. Yea, for such wry-necks all the world's a lawn

To peek and peer and pounce a sinful worm ;

The fatter, the more luscious.

THE REGENT

Regent.

Lucio,

This woman nought gainsays.

Fulvia (fiercely).

As why should I?

I'll question not, nor answer. 'Neath your brow

My sentence hunches, crawls, like cat to spring.

Pah! there's no prude will match your virtuous
wife

You'd banish me?

Regent.

I do. Cesario,

See to it the City gate shuts not to-night,

And she this side.

Fulvia (laughs recklessly). To-night? To-night's your
own.

Most modest woman! Duchess, there's a well

By the road, some seven miles beyond the
town.

There, 'neath the stars, I'll dip a hand and drink

To the good Duke's disport. But have a care!

That cup's not yet to lip.

THE REGENT

Regent.

Captain, remove her.

Lucio, remain.

[Exeunt the Countess Fulvia, Cesario following]

Lucio.

I'll not remain—When ice

Sits judge of fire, what justice shall be done?

Sister, there be your books—peruse them. There

The sea-line—bide you so with back to it.

While the cold inward heat of cruelty

Warms what was once your heart, now crusted o'er

With duty and slimed with poisonous drip of
tongues.

God help the Duke, if what he left he'd find!

[Exit Lucio.]

Regent. Is't so, I wonder? Go, Lucetta, fetch

My glass, if haply I may tell.

[Exit Lucetta.]

Is't so?

And have these years enforced, encrusted me

To something monstrous, neither woman nor man?

THE REGENT

My lord, my lord! too heavy was the load
You laid! Yet I'll not blame you: for myself
Ruled the straight path, the long account correct
As in these books, my ledgers. . . .

[*While she turns the pages, Gamba the Fool creeps
in and hoists himself on the balustrade. He
tries his viol, and sings.*

SONG: *Gamba.*

Bird of the South, my Rondinello—

Regent. Hey? That Song!

Gamba. Hie to me, fly to me, steel-blue mate!

Under my breast-knot flutters thy fellow;

Here can I rest not, and thou so late.

Home, to me, home!

'Love, love, I come!'

—Dear one, I wait!

Quanno nacesti tu, nacqui pur io:

La lundanza tua, 'l desiderio mio!

THE REGENT

You know the song, madonna ?

Regent.

Ay, fool. Sit

Here at my feet, sing on.

Gamba (sings).

Bird of the South, my Rondinello

Under thy wing my heart hath lain

Till the rain falling on last leaves yellow

Drumm'd to thee, calling southward again.

Home, to me, home !

' Love, love, I come !'

Ah, love, the pain !

Addio, addio ! ed un' altra volt' addio !

La lundanza tua, 'l desiderio mio !

(Pause).

A foolish rustic thing the shepherd wives

In our Abruzzi croon, by winter fires,

Of their husbands in the plains.

Regent.

Gamba !

THE REGENT

Gamba.

Madonna?

Regent. I'd make thee my confessor. Mindest thou,
By Villalago, where from Sanno's lake
The stream, our Tasso, hurls it down the glen?
One noon, with Lucio—ever in those days
With Lucio—on a rock within the spray,
I wove a ferny garland, while the boy
Roamed, but returned in triumph, having
trapped
A bee in a bell-flower—held it to my ear,
Laughing, dissembling that he feared to loose
The hairy thief. So laughed we—and were
still,
As deep in Vallescura wound a horn,
And up the pathway 'neath the dappling bough
Came riding—flecked with sunshine, man and
horse,—
My lord, my lover; and that song, that song
Upon his lips. . . .

THE REGENT

Voice of Watchman. Sail ho! a sail! a sail!

[*Murmur of populace below. It grows and swells to a roar as enter hurriedly courtiers, guards, and others: Cesario; Lucetta with mirror.*

Lucetta. My lady! O my lady!—

Cesario. See, they near!

Galley on galley—look, there, by the point!

Regent. O, could my heart keep tally with the surge
That here comes crowding!

Lucetta. Joy, my lady! Joy!

All. Joy! Joy, my lady!

[*They press flowers on her. A pause, while they watch. On the canal the galleys come into sight. They near: and as the oars rise and fall, the rowers' chorus is borne from the distance. It is the Rondinello song.*

Chorus in Distance. *La lundananza tua, 'l desiderio mio!*

Regent. Thanks, my good, good friends!

And deem it not discourteous if alone

THE REGENT

I'd tune my heart to bliss.

My glass, Lucetta!

[*Takes mirror.*]

Some thoughts there are—some thoughts—

Courtiers.

God save you, madam!

[*They go out, leaving the Regent alone.*]

Regent (she loosens the clasp of her robe). Some thoughts

—some thoughts—

Fall from me, envious robe!

Rest there, my crown—thou more than leaden
ache!

Ah!—

God! What a mountain drops! I float—I am lifted
Like thistledown on nothing. Back, my crown—
Weight me to earth! Nay, nay, thy rim shall bite
No more upon this forehead . . . Where's my
glass?

O mirror, mirror, hath it bit so deep?

My love is coming, hark! O, say not grey,

THE REGENT

Sweet mirror! Tell, what time to cure it now?

And he so near, so near!

How shall I meet him?

Why how but as the river leaps to sea,

Steel to its magnet, child to mother's arms?

*[She catches up flowers from the baskets left by the
courtiers, and decks herself wildly.]*

Flowers for my hair, flowers at the breast! Sweet
flowers,

He'll crush you 'gainst his corslet. He has arms

Like bands of iron for clasping, has my love.

He'll hurt, he'll hurt . . . But oh, sweet flowers,
to lie

And feel you helpless while he grips and bruises

Your weak protesting breasts! You'll die in bliss,

Panting your fragrance out.—

Wh'st! Hush, poor fool!

I have unlearned love's very alphabet.

Men like us coy, demure . . . Then I'll coquet

THE REGENT

And play Madam Disdain—but not to-day .
To-morrow I'll be shrewish, shy, perverse,
Exacting, cold—all April in my moods :
We'll walk the forest, and I'll slip from him,
Hide me like Dryad 'mid the oaks, and mark
His hot dark face pursuing ; or I'll couch
In covert green, and hold my breath to hear
His blundering foot go by ; then up I'll leap,
And run—and he'll run after. O this lightness !
I'll draw him like a fairy, dance and double—
Yet not so fast but he shall overtake
At length, and catch me panting. O, I charge you,
I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,
Wake not my love beneath the forest bough
Where we lie dreaming !

[Fanfare of trumpets in the distance.

Trumpets, hark ! and drums !
They have landed ! From the quay they march !
Flowers ! flowers !

THE REGENT

They are near . . . I see him! . . . Carlo! lord
and love!

He looks—waves—O 'tis he! O foolish heart!—
I had feared he'd ta'en a wound.

What is't they shout?
Eh? 'Victory!'—yes, yes. He's browner, thinner;
And the dear eyes, how gaunt! . . . Yes,
'Victory!'

'Victory!' . . . lord, and love! . . .

*[The shouts of acclamation are heard now close
under the terrace. Spears and banners are
seen trooping past. Beside herself, she throws
flowers to them, laughing, weeping the while.
Then, running to the Chapel door, she
prostrates herself before the image of the
Virgin that crowns its archway.]*

O Mary, Mother!

Thou, in whose breast all women's thoughts have
moved,

THE REGENT

All woman's passions heaved. Lo ! I adore !
Sweet Mother, hold my hands, rejoice with me :
My bridegroom cometh !

[During this invocation the Countess Fulvia has crept in, a stiletto in her hand. She leans over the Regent and stabs her twice in the breast.]

Fulvia. Then with that !—and that !
Go meet him !

Regent (turns, looks up, and falls on her face).

Oh ! I am slain !

Fulvia. And I am worse !
But there's my flower, my red flower, on your
breast.—

Go, meet your lord and show it !

[She passes down the steps as Lucetta runs in.]

Lucetta. Madam ! Madam !
The Duke is at the gate—Madam !—
Christ ! she is murdered ! Murder ! Murder !

THE REGENT

Regent.

Fie,

Lucetta ! peace ! What word to greet the Duke
For his home-coming ! Lift me . . . Quick, my
robe—

My Crown ! Call no one. O, but hasten !

Lucetta (helpless, wringing her hands). Madam !

Regent. I need your strength, and must I steady
you ?

Lucetta, years ago you disarrayed me

Upon my bridal night. I would you'd whisper

The rogueries your tongue invented then.

I have few moments, girl . . . I'd have them
wanton.

Make jest this mantle hides the maid I was.

I'll have no priest, no doctor—Fetch Tonino !

I must present his son——

[*Lucetta runs out.*]

All's acted quick :

Bride-bed, conception, birth—and death ! But he

THE REGENT

Shall sum it in one moment death not takes . . .

What noise of trumpets! . . . Is the wound not covered?

[She wraps herself carefully in her mantle as the courtiers pour in. The child Tonino runs to her and stands by her side. Lucio, Cesario, all the Court, group themselves round her as the Duke enters. He rushes in eagerly; but she sets her teeth on her anguish, and receives him with a low reverence.]

Welcome my lord!

Duke.

Ottilia!

Regent.

Good my lord,

Welcome! This day is bright restores you to
Your loyal Duchy.

Duke (impatient).

Wife! Ottilia!

Regent (she lifts a hand to keep him at distance).

There must be forms, my lord—some forms! Cesario,
Render the Duke his sceptre. As bar to socket,

THE REGENT

When the gate closes on a town secure,
So locks this rod back to his manly clutch—
Cry all, 'Long live the Duke!'

All. Long live the Duke!

Duke. Wife, make an end with forms!

Lucio (to Cesario). And so say I!

A man would think my sister had no blood
In her body.

Cesario (watching the Regent). Peace, man: something
there's amiss.

Regent. Yet here is he that sceptre shall inherit.

Lucetta, lead his first-born to the Duke.

His first-born!—Nay but look on him how
straight

Of limb, how set and shoulder-square, tho'
slender!

He'll sit a horse, in time, and toss a lance
Even with his father.

Duke. There's my blessing, boy!

THE REGENT

But stand aside. Look in my face, Ottilia—
Hearken me, all! One thing these seven years
My life hath lacked, which wanting, all your
cannon,
Your banners, *vivas*, bells that rock the roofs,
Throng'd windows, craning faces—all—all—all
Were phantasms, were noise.—

Lucio (exclaims). Why look, here's blood!
Here, on the boy's hand!

Regent. Ay! a scratch, no worse,
Here, when I pinned my robe.

Duke (continuing). Nay, friends, this moment
My Duchy her dear hand restores to me
To me's a dream. More buoyant would I tread
Dumb street, deserted square, climb ruin'd
wall,
Where in a heap beneath a broken flag
Lay Adria.—
So that amid the ruins stood my love

THE REGENT

And stretched her hands so faintly—stretched her
hands

So faintly. See ! She's mine ! She lifts them——

*Regent (totters and falls into his arms with a tired, happy
laugh, which ends in a cry as his arms enfold
her). Ah !*

[*She faints.*

*Duke. (after a moment, releasing her a little). What's
here ? Ottilia !*

Lucetta. My mistress swoons !

A Courtier. 'Tis happiness——

Duke. Fetch water !

Lucio. Nay this blood—
Came of no scratch !

Lucetta. Loosen her bodice——

Duke. Blood ?
Why blood ? Where's blood ?

(Stares as the mantle is unclasped and falls open).

Ah, my God !

THE REGENT

I swim in bliss. What . . . Lucio? Where's my
lord?

Dear, bring him: he was here awhile and held
me.

Say he must hold, or the light air will lift
And bear me quite away.

*[Re-enter Cesario. In one hand he carries his
sword, in the other a dagger.]*

Lucio.

Cesario!

What! Is that devil escaped? To think—to think
I drank her kisses!—What? Where is she?

Cesario.

Dead.

I raised the cry: the people pointed after;
Ran with me, ravening. Just this side the
bridge
She heard our howl and turned—drew back the
dagger
Red with our lady's blood, then drove it home
Clean to her own black heart.

THE REGENT

Regent. God pardon her!

I would what blood of mine clung to the blade
Might mix with hers and sweeten it for mercy.

Lucio. Will you forgive her? Then forgive not me!

Regent. Dear Lucio!—You'll not pluck away your
hand

This time? Hush! Where's Cesario? . . . Friend,
farewell.

Where lies the body?

Cesario. Sooth, madonna, I flung it

To the river's will, to roll it down to sea
Or cast on muddy bar, for dogs to gnaw.

Regent. The river? Ah! How strong the river
rolls!

Hold me, my lord—

Duke. Love, love, I hold you

Regent. —Ay!

The child, too—You will hold the child? . . .

This roar

THE REGENT

Deafens but will not drown us.

[*Within the Chapel the choir is chanting a dirge.*

*Gamba goes and closes the door on the sound :
then creeps to the foot of the couch. The
dying woman gently motions aside the cross
a priest is holding to her, and looks up at her
husband.*

[*Below the terrace a voice is heard singing the
Rondinello song.*

Look ! beyond

Be waters where no galley moves with oar,
So wide, so waveless,—and, between the woods,
Meadows—O land me there ! . . . Hark, my
lord's voice
Singing in Vallescura ! Soft my, love,
I am so tired—so tired ! Love, let me play !

[*Dies.*

[*The Courtiers lift the body in silence and bear it
to the Chapel, the Duke and his train following.*

THE REGENT

The doors close on them. On the stage are left only Cesario, standing by the balustrade; and Gamba, who has seated himself with his viol and touches it, as still the voice sings below—

Addio, Addio! ed un'altra volt'addio!

La lundanza tua, 'l desiderio mio!

[On the last note a string of the viol cracks, and with a cry the Fool flings himself, heart-broken, on the empty couch. Cesario steps forward and stands over him, touching his shoulder gently.

CURTAIN.

POEMS

EXMOOR VERSES

I. VASHTI'S SONG

Over the rim of the Moor,
 And under the starry sky,
Two men came to my door
 And rested them thereby.

Beneath the bough and the star,
 In a whispering foreign tongue,
They talked of a land afar
 And the merry days so young!

Beneath the dawn and the bough
 I heard them arise and go :
And my heart it is aching now
 For the more it will never know.

EXMOOR VERSES

Why did they two depart

Before I could understand ?

Where lies that land, O my heart ?

—O my heart, where lies that land ?

II. SATURN

From mý farm, from hère farm

Furtively we came.

In either home a hearth was warm :

We nursed a hungrier flame.

Our feet were foul with mire,

Our faces blind with mist ;

But all the night was naked fire

About us where we kiss'd.

EXMOOR VERSES

To hèr farm, to mÿ farm,
Loathing we returned ;
Pale beneath a gallow's arm
The planet Saturn burned.

III. DERELICTION

O'er the tears that we shed, dear
The bitter vines twist,
And the hawk and the red deer
They keep where we kiss'd :
All broken lies the shieling
That sheltered from rain,
With a star to pierce the ceiling,
And the dawn an empty pane.

EXMOOR VERSES

Thro' the mist, up the moorway,

 Fade hunters and pack ;

From the ridge to thy doorway

 Happy voices float back . . .

O, between the threads o' mist, love,

 Reach your hands from the house .

Only mind that we kiss'd, love,

 And forget the broken vows !

TWO FOLK SONGS

TWO FOLK SONGS

I. THE SOLDIER

(Roumanian)

*When winter trees bestrew the path,
Still to the twig a leaf or twain
Will cling and weep, not Winter's wrath,
But that foreknown forlorn pain—
To fall when green leaves come again.*

I watch'd him sleep by the furrow—
The first that fell in the fight.
His grave they would dig to-morrow :
The battle called them to-night.

They bore him aside to the trees, there,
By his undigg'd grave content
To lie on his back at ease there,
And hark how the battle went.

TWO FOLK SONGS

The battle went by the village,
And back through the night were borne
Far cries of murder and pillage,
With smoke from the standing corn.

But when they came on the morrow,
They talk'd not over their task,
As he listen'd there by the furrow ;
For the dead mouth could not ask—

How went the battle, my brothers ?

But that he will never know :
For his mouth the red earth smothers
As they shoulder their spades and go.

Yet he cannot sleep thereunder,
But ever must toss and turn.

How went the battle, I wonder ?

—And that he will never learn !

TWO FOLK SONGS

*When winter trees bestrew the path,
Still to the twig a leaf or twain
Will cling and weep, not Winter's wrath,
But that foreknown, forlorn pain—
To fall when green leaves come again !*

II. THE MARINE

(Poitevin)

THE bold Marine comes back from war,
So kind :

The bold Marine comes back from war,
So kind :

With a raggety coat and a worn-out shoe.
“ Now, poor Marine, say, whence come you,
All so kind ? ”

TWO FOLK SONGS

I travel back from the war, madame,

So kind :

I travel back from the war, madame,

So kind :

For a glass of wine and a bowl of whey,

'Tis I will sing you a ballad gay,

All so kind.

The bold Marine he sips his whey,

So kind :

He sips and he sings his ballad gay,

So kind :

But the dame she turns toward the wall,

To wipe her tears that fall and fall,

All so kind.

What aileth you at my song, madame,

So kind ?

I hope that I sing no wrong, madame,

So kind ?

TWO FOLK SONGS

Or grieves it you a beggar should dine
On a bowl of whey and the good white wine,
All so kind ?

“ It ails me not at your ballad gay,

So kind :

It ails me not for the wine and whey,

So kind :

But it ails me sore for the voice and eyes

Of a good man long in Paradise.—

Ah, so kind ! ”

You have fair children five, madame,

So kind :

You have fair children five, madame,

So kind :

Your good man left you children three ;

Whence came these twain for company,

All so kind ?

TWO FOLK SONGS

“ A letter came from the war, Marine,

So kind :

A letter came from the war, Marine,

So kind :

A while I wept for the good man dead,

But another good man in a while I wed,

All so kind.”

The bold Marine he drained his glass,

So kind :

The bold Marine he drained his glass,

So kind.

He said not a word, though the tears they flowed,

But back to his regiment took the road,

All so kind.

MARY LESLIE

MARY LESLIE

Before Vittoria, June 20, 1813

O MARY LESLIE, blithe and shrill
The bugles blew for Spain :
And you below the Castle Hill
Stood in the crowd your lane.
Then hearts were wild to watch us pass,
Yet laith to let us go !
While mine said, "Fare-ye-well, my lass !"
And yours, "God keep my Jo !"

Here by the bivouac fire, above
These fields of savage play,
I'll lift my love to meet thy love
Twa thousand miles away,

MARY LESLIE

Where yonder, yonder by the stars,
 Nightlong there rins a burn,
And maids with lovers at the wars
 May list their wraiths' return.

More careless yet my spirit grows
 Of fame, more sick of blood :
But I can think of Badajoz,
 And yet that God is good.
Beyond the siege, beyond the stour,
 Beyond the sack of towns,
I reach to pluck ae lily-floo'r
 Where leaders press for crowns.

O Mary! lily! bow'd and wet
 With mair than mornin's rain !
The bugles up the Lawnmarket
 Shall sound us home again.

MARY LESLIE

Then fare-ye-well, these foreign lands,
And be damn'd their bitter drouth,
With your dear face between my hands
And the cup held to my mouth,
My love,
It's clean cup to my mouth !

JENIFER'S LOVE

JENIFER'S LOVE

SMALL is my secret—let it pass—

Small in your life the share I had,

Who sat beside you in the class,

Awed by the bright superior lad :

Whom yet with hot and eager face

I prompted when he missed his place.

For you the call came swift and soon :

But sometimes in your holidays

You meet me trudging home at noon

To dinner through the dusty ways,

And recognized, and with a nod

Passed on, but never guessed—thank God !

Truly our ways were separate.

I bent myself to hoe and drill,

JENIFER'S LOVE

Yea, with an honest man to mate,
Fulfilling God Almighty's will ;
And bore him children. But my prayers
Were yours—and, only after, theirs.

While you—still loftier, more remote,
You sprang from stair to stair of fame,
And you've a riband on your coat,
And you've a title to your name ;
But have you yet a star to shine
Above your bed, as I o'er mine ?

TWO DUETS

TWO DUETS

From "Arion," an unpublished Masque

I

He. Aglai-a ! Aglai-a !

Sweet, awaken and be glad.

She. Who is this that calls Aglaia ?

Is it thou, my dearest lad ?

He. 'Tis Arion, 'tis Arion,

Who calls thee from sleep—

From slumber who bids thee

To follow and number

His kids and his sheep.

She. Nay, leave to entreat me !

If mother should spy on

Us twain, she would beat me.

TWO DUETS

He. Then come, my love, come !
And hide with Arion
Where green woods are dumb !

She. Ar-i-on ! Ar-i-on !
Closer, list ! I am afraid !

He. Whisper, then, thy love Arion,
From thy window, lily maid.

She. Yet Aglaia, yet Aglaia
Hath heard them debate
Of wooing repenting—
“Who trust to undoing,
Lament them too late.”

He. Nay, nay, when I woo thee,
Thy mother might spy on
All harm I shall do thee.

She. I come, then—I come !
To follow Arion
Where green woods be dumb.

TWO DUETS

SONG

Sparrow of Love, so sharp to peck,
Arrow of Love—I bare my neck
Down to the bosom. See, no fleck

Of blood! I have never a wound; I go
Forth to the greenwood. Yet, heigh-ho!
What 'neath my girdle flutters so?

'Tis not a bird, and yet hath wings,
'Tis not an arrow, yet it stings;
While in the wound it nests and sings—

Heigh-ho!

He. Of Arion, of Arion

That wound thou shalt learn;
What nothings 'tis made of,
And soft pretty soothings
In shade of the fern.

TWO DUETS

She. When maids have a mind to,
Man's word they rely on,
Old warning are blind to—
I come, then—I come
To walk with Arion
Where green woods are dumb !

II

He. Dear my love, and O my love,
And O my love so lately !
Did we wander yonder grove
And sit awhile sedately ?
For either you did there conclude
To do at length as I did,
Or passion's fashion's turn'd a prude,
And troth's an oath derided.

TWO DUETS

She. Yea, my love—and nay, my love—
 And ask me not to tell, love,
While I delay'd an idle day
 What 'twixt us there befell, love.
Yet either I did sit beside
 And do at length as you did,
Or my delight is lightly by
 An idle lie deluded!

THE STATUES AND THE TEAR

THE STATUES AND THE TEAR

ALL night a fountain pleads,
 Telling her beads,
Her tinkling beads monotonous 'neath the moon ;
 And where she springs atween,
 Two statues lean—
Two Kings, their marble beards with moonlight
 strewn.

Till hate had frozen speech,
 Each hated each,
Hated and died, and went unto his place :
 And still inveterate
 They lean and hate
With glare of stone implacable, face to face.

THE STATUES AND THE TEAR

One, who bade set them here
In stone austere,
To both was dear, and did not guess at all :
Yet with her new-wed lord
Walking the sward
Paused, and for two dead friends a tear let fall.

She turn'd and went her way.
Yet in the spray
The shining tear attempts, but cannot lie.
Night-long the fountain drips,
But even slips
Untold that one bead of her rosary :
While they, who know it would
Lie if it could,
Lean on and hate, watching it, eye to eye.

NUPTIAL NIGHT

NUPTIAL NIGHT

HUSH! and again the chatter of the starling
 Athwart the lawn!
Lean your head close and closer, O my darling!—
 It is the dawn.

Dawn in the dusk of her dream,
 Dream in the hush of her bosom, unclose!
Bathed in the eye-bright beam,
 Blush to her cheek, be a blossom, a rose!

Go, nuptial night! the floor of Ocean tressing
 With moon and star;
With benediction go and breathe thy blessing
 On coasts afar.

NUPTIAL NIGHT

Hark ! the theorbos thrum

O'er the arch'd wave that in white smother booms.

“ Mother of Mystery, come !

Fain for thee wait other brides, other grooms ! ”

Go, nuptial night, my breast of hers bereaving !

Yet, O, tread soft !

Grow day, blithe day, the mountain shoulder heaving

More gold aloft !

Gold, rose, bird of the dawn,

All to her balcony gather unseen—

Thrill through the curtain drawn,

Bless her, bedeck her, and bathe her, my Queen !

HESPERUS

HESPERUS

Down in the street the last late hansoms go
Still westward, but with backward eyes of red
The harlot shuffles to her lonely bed ;
The tall policeman pauses but to throw
A flash into the empty portico ;
Then he too passes, and his lonely tread
Links all the long-drawn gas-lights on a thread
And ties them to one planet swinging low.

O Hesperus ! O happy star ! to bend
O'er Helen's bosom in the trancèd west—
To watch the hours heave by upon her breast
And at her parted lip for dreams attend :
If dawn defraud thee, how shall I be deem'd,
Who house within that bosom, and am dreamed ?

CHANT ROYAL OF HIGH VIRTUE

CHANT ROYAL OF HIGH VIRTUE

Who lives in suit of armour pent
And hides himself behind a wall,
For him is not the great event,
The garland nor the Capitol.
And is God's guerdon less than they?
Nay, moral man, I tell thee Nay:
Nor shall the flaming forts be won
By sneaking negatives alone,
By Lenten fast or Ramazàn;
But by the challenge proudly thrown—
Virtue is that becrowns a Man!

God, in His Palace resident
Of Bliss, beheld our sinful ball,
And charged His own Son innocent
Us to redeem from Adam's fall.

CHANT ROYAL OF HIGH VIRTUE

“Yet must it be that men Thee slay.”
“Yea, tho’ it must, must I obey,”
Said Christ ; and came, His royal Son,
To die, and dying to atone
 For harlot, thief, and publican.
Read on that rood He died upon—
 Virtue is that becrowns a Man !

Beneath that rood where He was bent
 I saw the world’s great captains all
Pass riding home from tournament
 Adown the road from Roncesvalles—
Lord Charlemagne, in one array
Lords Cæsar, Cyrus, Attila,
Lord Alisaundre of Macedon . . .
With flame on lance and habergeon
 They passed, and to the rataplan
Of drums gave salutation—
 “*Virtue is that becrowns a Man !*”

CHANT ROYAL OF HIGH VIRTUE

Had tall Achilles lounged in tent

For aye, and Xanthus neigh'd in stall,
The towers of Troy had ne'er been shent,
Nor stay'd the dance in Priam's hall.

Bend o'er thy book till thou be grey,
Read, mark, perpend, digest, survey,
Instruct thee deep as Solomon,
One only chapter thou canst con,

One lesson learn, one sentence scan,
One title and one colophon—

Virtue is that becrowns a Man !

High Virtue's hest is eloquent

With spur and not with martingall :
Swear not to her thou'rt continent :

BE COURTEOUS, BRAVE, AND LIBERAL.
God fashion'd thee of chosen clay
For service, nor did ever say,
“ Deny thee this,” “ Abstain from yon,”

CHANT ROYAL OF HIGH VIRTUE

But to inure thee, thew and bone,
To be confirmèd of the clan
That made immortal Marathon—
Virtue is that becrowns a Man !

ENVOY

Young Knight, the lists are set to-day !
Hereafter shall be time to pray
In sepulture, with hands of stone.
Ride, then ! outride the bugle blown !
And gaily dinging down the van,
Charge with a cheer—" *Set on ! Set on !*
Virtue is that becrowns a Man !"

CORONATION HYMN

CORONATION HYMN

Tune—Luther's Chorale

“ Ein' feste burg ist unser Gott ”

I

OF old our City hath renown,
Of God are her foundations,
Wherein this day a King we crown
Elate among the nations.

Acknowledge, then, thou King—
And you, ye people, sing—
What deeds His arm hath wrought :
Yea, let their tale be taught
To endless generations.

II

So long, so far, Jehovah guides
His people's path attending,

CORONATION HYMN

By pastures green and water-sides
Toward His hill ascending ;
Whence they beneath the stars
Shall view their ancient wars,
Their perils, far removed.
O might of mercy proved !
O love past comprehending !

III

He was that God, for man which spake
From Sinai forth in thunder ;
He was that Love, for man which brake
The dreadful grave asunder.
Lord over every lord,
His consecrating word
An earthly prince awaits ;
Lift then your heads, ye gates !
Your King comes riding under.

CORONATION HYMN

1V

Be ye lift up, ye deathless doors ;
Let wave your banners o'er Him !
Exult, ye streets ; be strewn, ye floors,
With palm, with bay, before Him !
With transport fetch Him in,
Ye ransom'd folk from sin—
Your Lord, return'd to bless !
O kneeling king, confess—
O subject men, adore Him !

THREE MEN OF TRURO

THREE MEN OF TRURO

1

E. W. B.

*Archbishop of Canterbury : sometime the First Bishop
of Truro. October 1896*

THE Church's outpost on a neck of land—

By ebb of faith the foremost left the last—

Dull, starved of hope, we watched the driven sand

Blown through the hour-glass, covering our past,

Counting no hours to our relief—no hail

Across the hills, and on the sea no sail !

Sick of monotonous days we lost account,

In fitful dreams remembering days of old

THREE MEN OF TRURO

And nights—th' erect Archangel on the Mount
With sword that drank the dawn; the Vase of Gold,
The moving Grail athwart the starry fields
Where all the heavenly spearmen clashed their
shields.

In dereliction by the deafening shore
We sought no more aloft, but sunk our eyes,
Probing the sea for food, the earth for ore.
Ah, yet had one good soldier of the skies
Burst through the wrack reporting news of them,
How had we run and kissed his garment's hem!

Nay, but he came! Nay, but he stood and cried,
Panting with joy and the fierce fervent race,
“Arm, arm! for Christ returns!”—and all our pride,
Our ancient pride, answered that eager face:
“Repair His battlements!—Your Christ is near!”
And, half in dream, we raised the soldiers' cheer.

THREE MEN OF TRURO

Far, as we flung that challenge, fled the ghosts—

Back, as we built, the obscene foe withdrew—

High to the song of hammers sang the hosts

Of Heaven—and lo! the daystar, and a new

Dawn with its chalice and its wind as wine;

And youth was hope, and life once more divine!

Day, and hot noon, and now the evening glow,

And 'neath our scaffolding the city spread

Twilit, with rain-wash'd roofs, and—hark!—below,

One late bell tolling. “Dead? Our Captain dead?”

Nay, here with us he fronts the westering sun

With shaded eyes and counts the wide fields won.

Aloft with us! And while another stone

Swings to its socket, haste with trowel and hod!

Win the old smile a moment ere, alone,

Soars the great soul to bear report to God.

Night falls; but thou, dear Captain, from thy star

Look down, behold how bravely goes the war!

THREE MEN OF TRURO

II

A. B. D.

Canon Residentiary and Precentor of Truro

December 1903

MANY had builded, and, the building done,
Through our adornèd gates with din
Came Prince and Priest, with pipe and clarion
Leading the right God in.

Yet, had the perfect temple quickened then
And whispered us between our song,
“ *Give God the praise. To whom of living men
Shall next our thanks belong ?* ”

Then had the few, the very few, that wist
His Atlantean labour, swerved
Their eyes to seek, and in the triumph missed,
The man that most deserved.

THREE MEN OF TRURO

He only of us was incorporate

In all that fabric ; stone by stone

Had built his life in her, had made his fate

And her perfection one ;

Given all he had ; and now—when all was given—

Far spent, within a private shade,

Heard the loud organ pealing praise to Heaven,

And learned why man is made.—

To break his strength, yet always to be brave ;

To preach, and act, the Crucified . . .

Sweep by, O Prince and Prelate, up the nave,

And fill it with your pride !

Better than ye what made th' old temples great,

Because he loved, he understood ;

Indignant that his darling, less in state,

Should lack a martyr's blood.

THREE MEN OF TRURO

She hath it now. O mason, strip away
Her scaffolding, the flower disclose !
Lay by the tools with his o'er-wearied clay—
But She shall bloom unto its Judgment Day,
His ever-living Rose !

III

C. W. S.

The Fourth Bishop of Truro

May 1912

PRINCE of courtesy defeated,
Heir of hope untimely cheated,
Throned awhile he sat, and, seated,

Saw his Cornish round him gather ;
“Teach us how to live, good Father !”
How to die he taught us rather :

THREE MEN OF TRURO

Heard the startling trumpet sound him,
Smiled upon the feast around him,
Rose, and wrapp'd his coat, and bound him

When beyond the awful surges,
Bathed in dawn on Syrian verges,
God! thy star, thy Cross emerges.

And so sing we all to it—

Crux, in cœlo lux superna,
Sis in carnis hac taberna
Mihi pedibus lucerna :

Quo vexillum dux cohortis
Sistet, super flumen Mortis,
Te, flammantibus in portis !

ALMA MATER

ALMA MATER

KNOW you her secret none can utter ?

Hers of the Book, the tripled Crown ?

Still on the spire the pigeons flutter,

Still by the gateway flits the gown ;

Still on the street, from corbel and gutter,

Faces of stone look down.

Faces of stone, and stonier faces—

Some from library windows wan

Forth on her gardens, her green spaces,

Peer and turn to their books anon.

Hence, my Muse, from the green oases

Gather the tent, begone !

ALMA MATER

Nay, should she by the pavement linger
Under the rooms where once she played,
Who from the feast would rise to fling her
One poor *sou* for her serenade?
One short laugh for the antic finger
Thrumming a lute-string frayed?

Once, my dear—but the world was young then—
Magdalen elms and Trinity limes—
Lissom the blades and the backs that swung then,
Eight good men in the good old times—
Careless we, and the chorus flung then
Under St Mary's chimes!

Reins lay loose and the ways led random—
Christ Church meadow and Iffley track,
"Idleness horrid and dog-cart" (tandem),
Aylesbury grind and Bicester pack—
Pleasant our lines, and faith! we scanned 'em:
Having that artless knack.

ALMA MATER

Come, old limmer, the times grow colder ;
Leaves of the creeper redden and fall.
Was it a hand then clapped my shoulder?—
Only the wind by the chapel wall !
Dead leaves drift on the lute . . . So, fold her
Under the faded shawl.

Never we wince, though none deplore us,
We who go reaping that we sowed ;
Cities at cock-crow wake before us—
Hey, for the lilt of the London road !
One look back, and a rousing chorus !
Never a palinode !

Still on her spire the pigeons hover ;
Still by her gateway haunts the gown.
Ah ! but her secret ? You, young lover,
Drumming her old ones forth from town,
Know you the secret none discover ?
Tell it—when *you* go down.

ALMA MATER

Yet if at length you seek her, prove her,

Lean to her whispers never so nigh ;

Yet if at last not less her lover

You in your hansom leave the High ;

Down from her towers a ray shall hover—

Touch you, a passer-by !

CHRISTMAS EVE

CHRISTMAS EVE

FRIEND, old friend in the Manse by the fireside sitting,
Hour by hour while the grey ash drips from the
log,
You with a book on your knee, your wife with her
knitting,
Silent both, and between you, silent, the dog.

Silent here in the south sit I ; and, leaning,
One sits watching the fire, with chin upon hand ;
Gazes deep in its heart—but ah ! its meaning
Rather I read in the shadows and understand.

Dear, kind she is ; and daily dearer, kinder,
Love shuts the door on the lamp and our two selves :

CHRISTMAS EVE

Not my stirring awakened the flame that behind her
Lit up a face in the leathern dusk of the shelves.

Veterans are my books, with tarnished gilding :
Yet there is one gives back to the winter grate
Gold of a sunset flooding a college building,
Gold of an hour I waited—as now I wait—

For a light step on the stair, a girl's low laughter,
Rustle of silk, shy knuckles tapping the oak,
Dinner and mirth upsetting my rooms and, after,
Music, waltz upon waltz, till the June day broke.

Where is her laughter now? Old tarnished covers—
You that reflect her with fresh young face un-
changed—

Tell that we met, that we parted, not as lovers ;
Time, chance, brought us together, and these
estranged.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Loyal were we to the mood of the moment granted,
Bruised not its bloom, but danced on the wave of
its joy :

Passion—wisdom—fell back like a fence enchanted,
Ringing a floor for us both—whole Heaven for the
boy !

Where is she now ? Regretted not, though departed,
Blessings attend and follow her all her days !
—Look to your hound : he dreams of the hares he
started,
Whines, and awakes, and stretches his limbs to the
blaze.

Far old friend in the Manse, by the green ash peeling
Flake by flake from the heat in the Yule log's
core,
Look past the woman you love. On wall and ceiling
Climbs not a trellis of roses—and ghosts—of yore ?

CHRISTMAS EVE

Thoughts, thoughts! Whistle them back like hounds
returning—

Mark how her needles pause at a sound upstairs.

Time for bed, and to leave the log's heart burning!

Give ye good-night, but first thank God in your
prayers!

THE ROOT

THE ROOT

DEEP, Love, yea, very deep,
And in the dark exiled,
I have no sense of light but still to creep
And know the breast, but not the eyes. Thy child
Saw ne'er his mother near, nor if she smiled ;
But only feels her weep.

Yet clouds and branches green
There be aloft, somewhere,
And winds, and angel birds that build between,
As I believe—and I will not despair ;
For faith is evidence of things not seen.
Love ! if I could be there !

THE ROOT

I will be patient, dear.

Perchance some part of me
Puts forth aloft and feels the rushing year
And shades the bird, and is that happy tree
Then were it strength to serve and not appear,
And bliss, though blind, to be.

TO A FRIEND

TO A FRIEND WHO SENT ME A BOX
OF VIOLETS

NAY, more than violets
These thoughts of thine, friend !
Rather thy reedy brook—
Taw's tributary—
At midnight murmuring,
Descried them, the delicate
Dark-eyed goddesses,
There by his cressy bed
Dissolved and dreaming
Dreams that distilled into dew
All the purple of night,
All the shine of a planet.

Whereat he whispered ;
And they arising—

TO A FRIEND

Of day's forget-me-nots
The duskier sisters—
Descended, relinquished
The orchard, the trout-pool,
Torridge and Tamar,
The Druid circles,
Sheepfolds of Dartmoor,
Granite and sandstone ;
By Roughtor, Dozmare,
Down the vale of the Fowey
Moving in silence,
Brushing the nightshade
By bridges cyclopean,
By Trevenna, Treverbyn,
Lawharne and Largin,
By Glynn, Lanhydrock,
Restormel, Lostwithiel,
Dark wood, dim water, dreaming town ;
Down the vale of the Fowey

TO A FRIEND

To the tidal water
Washing the feet
Of fair St Winnow—
Each, in her exile
Musing the message,
Passed, as the starlit
Shadow of Ruth from the land
of the Moabite.

So they came,
Valley-born, valley-nurtured—
Came to the tideway
The jetties, the anchorage,
The salt wind piping,
Snoring in Equinox,
By ships at anchor,
By quays tormented,
Storm-bitten streets ;
Came to the Haven

TO A FRIEND

Crying, " Ah, shelter us,
The strayed ambassadors,
Love's lost legation
On a comfortless coast ! "

Nay, but a little sleep,
A little folding
Of petals to the lull
Of quiet rainfalls—
Here in my garden,
In angle sheltered
From north and east wind—
Softly shall recreate
The courage of charity,
Henceforth not to me only
Breathing the message.

Clean-breath'd Sirens !
Hencefore the mariner

TO A FRIEND

Here in the fairway
Fetching—foul of keel,
Long-stray but fortunate—
Out of the fogs, the vast
Atlantic solitudes,
Shall, by the hawser-pin
Waiting the signal
Leave—go—anchor!
Scent the familiar,
The unforgettable
Fragrance of home ;
So in a long breath
Bless us unknowing :
Bless them, the violets,
Bless me, the gardener,
Bless thee, the giver.

OF THREE CHILDREN

OF THREE CHILDREN CHOOSING A CHAPLET OF VERSE

You and I and Burd so blithe—
 Burd so blithe, and you, and I—
The Mower he would whet his scythe
 Before the dew was dry.

And he woke soon, but we woke soon
 And drew the nursery blind,
All wondering at the waning moon
 With the small June roses twined :
Low in her cradle swung the moon
 With an elfin dawn behind.

In whispers, while our elders slept,
 We knelt and said our prayers,
And dress'd us and on tiptoe crept
 Adown the creaking stairs.

OF THREE CHILDREN

The world's possessors lay abed,
And all the world was ours—
“Nay, nay, but hark! the Mower's tread!
And we must save the flowers!”

The Mower knew not rest nor haste—
That old unweary man:
But we were young. We paused and raced
And gather'd while we ran.

O youth is careless, youth is fleet,
With heart and wing of bird!
The lark flew up beneath our feet,
To his copse the pheasant whirr'd;

The cattle from their darkling lairs
Heaved up and stretch'd themselves;
Almost they trod at unawares
Upon the busy elves

OF THREE CHILDREN

That dropp'd their spools of gossamer,
To dangle and to dry,
And scurried home to the hollow fir
Where the white owl winks an eye.

Nor you, nor I, nor Burd so blithe
Had driven them in this haste ;
But the old, old man, so lean and lithe,
That afar behind us paced ;
So lean and lithe, with shoulder'd scythe,
And a whetstone at his waist.

Within the gate, in a grassy round
Whence they had earliest flown,
He upside-down'd his scythe, and ground
Its edge with careful hone.
But we heeded not, if we heard, the sound,
For the world was ours alone ;
The world was ours !—and with a bound
The conquering Sun upshone !

OF THREE CHILDREN

And while as from his level ray
 We stood our eyes to screen,
The world was not as yesterday
 Our homelier world had been—
So grey and golden-green it lay
 All in his quiet sheen,
That wove the gold into the grey,
 The grey into the green.
Sure never hand of Puck, nor wand
 Of Mab the fairies' queen,
Nor prince nor peer of fairyland
Had power to weave that wide riband
 Of the grey, the gold, the green.

But the Gods of Greece had been before
 And walked our meads along,
The great authentic Gods of yore
That haunt the earth from shore to shore
 Trailing their robes of song.

OF THREE CHILDREN

And where a sandall'd foot had brush'd,
 And where a scarfèd hem,
The flowers awoke from sleep and rush'd
 Like children after them.

Pell-mell they poured by vale and stream,
 By lawn and steepy brae—
“O children, children ! while you dream,
 Your flowers run all away !”

But afar and abed and sleepily
 The children heard us call ;
And Burd so blithe and you and I
 Must be gatherers for all.

The meadow-sweet beside the hedge
 The dog-rose and the vetch,
The sworded iris 'mid the sedge
 The mallow by the ditch—

OF THREE CHILDREN

With these, and by the wimpling burn,
Where the midges danced in reels,
With the watermint and the lady fern
We brimm'd out wicker creels :

Till, all so heavily they weigh'd,
On a bank we flung us down,
Shook out our treasures 'neath the shade
And wove this Triple Crown.

Flower after flower—for some there were
The noonday heats had dried,
And some were dear yet could not bear
A lovelier cheek beside,
And some were perfect past compare—
Ah, darlings ! what a world of care
It cost us to decide !

OF THREE CHILDREN

Natheless we sang in sweet accord,
Each bending o'er her brede—
"O there be flowers in Oxenford,
And flowers be north of Tweed,
And flowers there be on earthly sward
That owe no mortal seed!"

And these, the brightest that we wove,
Were Innocence and Truth,
And holy Peace and angel Love,
Glad Hope and gentle Ruth.
Ah, bind them fast with triple twine
Of Memory, the wild woodbine
That still, being human, stays divine,
And alone is age's youth! . . .

But hark! but look! the warning rook
Wings home in level flight;
The children tired with play and book
Have kiss'd and call'd Good-night!

OF THREE CHILDREN

Ah, sisters, look ! What fields be these

That lie so sad and shorn ?

What hand has cut our coppices,

And thro' the trimm'd, the ruin'd, trees

Lets wail a wind forlorn ?

'Tis Time, 'tis Time has done this crime

And laid our meadows waste—

The bent unwearied tyrant Time,

That knows nor rest nor haste.

Yet courage, children ; homeward bring

Your hearts, your garlands high ;

For we have dared to do a thing

That shall his worst defy.

We cannot nail the dial's hand ;

We cannot bind the sun

By Gibeon to stay and stand,

Or the moon o'er Ajalon ;

OF THREE CHILDREN

We cannot blunt th' abhorrèd shears,
Nor shift the skeins of Fate,
Nor say unto the posting years
"Ye shall not desolate."

We cannot cage the lion's rage,
Nor teach the turtle-dove
Beside what well his moan to tell
Or to haunt one only grove ;
But the lion's brood will range for food
As the fledgèd bird will rove.

And east and west we three may wend—
Yet we a wreath have wound
For us shall wind withouten end
The wide, wide world around :

Be it east or west, and ne'er so far,
In east or west shall peep no star,

OF THREE CHILDREN

No blossom break from ground,
But minds us of the wreath we wove
Of innocence and holy love

That in the meads we found,
And handsell'd from the Mower's scythe,
And bound with memory's living withe—
You and I and Burd so blithe—

Three maidens on a mound :
And all of happiness was ours
Shall find remembrance 'mid the flowers,
Shall take revival from the flowers

And by the flowers be crown'd.

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

TO A MOTHER, ON SEEING HER SMILE REPEATED
IN HER DAUGHTER'S EYES

A THOUSAND songs I might have made
Of You, and only You ;
A thousand thousand tongues of fire
That trembled down a golden wire
To lamp the night with stars, to braid
The morning bough with dew.

Within the greenwood girl and boy
Had loiter'd to their lure,
And men in cities closed their books
To dream of Spring and running brooks
And all that ever was of joy
For manhood to abjure.

EPILOGUE

And I'd have made them strong, so strong

Outlasting towers and towns—

Millennial shepherds 'neath the thorn

Had piped them to a world reborn,

And danced Delight the dale along

And up the daisied downs.

A thousand songs I might have made . . .

But you required them not ;

Content to reign your little while

Ere, abdicating with a smile,

You pass'd into a shade, a shade

Immortal—and forgot !

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